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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000594

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A A/S CARTER, AF/C

NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON

DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

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SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: IDPS COMPLAIN OF WATER SHORTAGES, DETERIORATING HEALTH AND SANITATION IN ABU SHOUK CAMP

REF: A) KHARTOUM 577

**¶11.** (SBU) Summary: The effects of the March 4 expulsion of thirteen INGOs continues to be felt in Abu Shouk camp, which is facing a water shortage and poor health and sanitation conditions, camp umdas (community leaders) reported to poloff on April 28 in El Fasher. In the health and sanitation realm, the umdas said that latrines are full and need to be emptied, soap distribution has ceased, and no spraying of insecticides has occurred since the April 7 unrest following a spraying that the umdas claim sickened several IDPs. They also reported that, with water infrastructure having fallen into disrepair under the management of local NGOs, enterprising IDPs have resorted to buying water in El Fasher town and reselling it in the camp for a profit. The umdas noted a breakdown of trust between local Sudanese NGOs and IDPs. Humanitarian workers in Abu Shouk camp have not documented such a dire and deteriorating situation as described by the umdas, nor has the UN corroborated these reports. Nonetheless, Post is monitoring the situation closely and following up with both the UN and remaining NGOs. End Summary.

**¶12.** (SBU) On April 28, poloff met with several umdas from Abu Shouk IDP camp, including Mohamed Izrif Ali, Ahmed Abu El Basher, and Hussein Fajo. The umdas expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to meet, noting that "the [US Embassy] Green House (one of the Embassy's rented houses in El Fasher) is "the only place" in which IDPs trust having meetings in the town of El Fasher. They reported that the humanitarian situation in Abu Shouk continues to deteriorate following the March 4 expulsion of thirteen INGOs, citing gaps left by Action Contre La Faim (nutrition), Oxfam (water and sanitation) and IRC (health) as having had the most significant impact. They also decried the apparent departure of SOS and the Spanish Red Cross (SpRC), which they claimed abandoned their work in the camp as a result of pressure from the government around the time of the expulsions. (NOTE: SpRC pulled out of Darfur in late 2007 for reasons unrelated to the ICC. END NOTE).

WATER SHORTAGE CONTINUES

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**¶13.** (SBU) A shortage of water remains one of the greatest humanitarian challenges in Abu Shouk, according to the umdas. The departure of Oxfam has resulted in a dearth of fuel and spare parts for water pumps. Local NGOs are not up to the task of managing the camp's water infrastructure; their failure to check or maintain the camp's boreholes has resulted in the drying up of several wells, they said. Currently the government's Water Environment and Sanitation (WES) Department is the only water provider in the camp. The government has committed to support the water, sanitation and hygiene operations in Darfur until the end of the year. According to El Basher, it now takes 3 days for a family to receive a half barrel of water (equivalent to six jerry cans.) (Note: Boreholes in North Darfur, including in IDP camps such as Abu Shouk, typically

dry up during the April-June dry season as a result of the lowering water table. The use of water in brick-making and construction in Abu Shouk further strains the camp's water resources. End Note.)

#### HEALTH AND SANITATION ALSO DETERIORATING

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¶ 14. (SBU) Due to water shortages, enterprising IDPs have taken to purchasing water in El Fasher town and reselling it at Abu Shouk for a profit. The water problem may also be causing adverse health effects. Claiming that there has been a rise in miscarriages among pregnant women in the camp, the umdas speculated that this was linked to the pregnant women spending hours pumping water from hand-pumps. They urged the USG to pressure the GOS to allow the return of capable INGOs to reverse the water crisis. "We need them to come rescue us," they said.

¶ 15. (SBU) The umdas noted that community leaders in Abu Shouk meet weekly to discuss the general situation in the camp. Last week, they said, nearly every umda reported a rise in diarrhea in children between 1-5 years old in their respective areas and an increase in child mortality. They claimed that 10 to 15 people were dying in Abu Shouk every day (including those of natural causes,) and noted the majority of these are children. (Note: An April 24 WHO epidemiological report does not corroborate this and states that 5-7 people per week are dying from disease in Abu Shouk. End Note.) Since the NGO expulsions, Health Kuwaiti Patient Fund, the Egyptian Hospital and the Ministry of Health (MOH), which took over the IRC clinic, are the only health providers in Abu Shouk camp. The umdas said they believed health problems were caused by poor sanitation, noting that many of the camp's latrines are full and have not been emptied. Oxfam also used to distribute soap for washing, they said. WES has distributed the remainder of soap held in Oxfam's

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warehouses, but has not replenished the stock. Since this happened, no additional soap has been distributed, and the umdas expressed concern that disease may be spreading as a result. UNICEF is the water, sanitation and hygiene sector lead, responsible for coordinating the replenishment of soap in IDP camps. However, due to a shortage of funds, UNICEF has had to cut back on the quantity of soap it provides throughout Darfur. Flies and other insects have also become a problem, the umdas said, noting that while INGOs used to spray insecticide in the camp, no one has done so since the April 7 unrest that followed the reported sickening of several women and children from an insecticide spraying ordered by the Ministry of Health. (Note: In the past WHO, in coordination with SMoH, has facilitated all vector control spraying campaigns. In the April 07 incident, camp residents were not adequately sensitized/notified that the spraying campaign would take place. This lack of notification resulted in the beating of two UN national staff by IDPs who were suspicious of what was being sprayed in the camp. The beatings have resulted in local NGOs being unwilling to enter the camp out of fear of IDP hostility. End Note).

#### LOCAL NGOS SHUNNED AS MISTRUST, SUSPICIONS ABOUND

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¶ 16. (SBU) The April spraying incident solidified feelings of mistrust and induced a total lack of confidence in local NGOs on the part of suspicious IDPs, according to the umdas. They cited, as an example, the Sudanese Ministry of Health's recent attempt to conduct a vaccination campaign in the camp, which was thwarted when suspicious mothers took the vaccines and threw them away. Al Basher also cited another incident in which a local NGO came to distribute medicine, but it turned out to be expired. "This shows the local NGOs are not acting in good faith," he said. (Note: The government has made an effort to staff the camp's former IRC clinic with Ministry of Health staff, but the IDP populations in the camp, especially women, are refusing to visit the clinics due to suspicion and fear. End Note.)

¶ 17. (SBU) El Basher stated that another reason for mistrust of local NGOs is the perception that they are focused not on humanitarian works, but rather on political and security concerns. Local NGOs are not using the same personnel as the expelled INGOs, and were loath to hire IDPs, he said. "These new people they are bringing in to work are associated with the security apparatus," he said. He noted

that on the dates of April 10, 11, 20 and 21, the security organs arrested a number of camp youth on unknown charges. The umdas also said that the reason they were over an hour late for the meeting with poloff was that they were not able to leave the camp together for fear of being seen by security forces.

¶8. (SBU) Like many IDPs, the umdas believe that the government is seeking to disperse the IDP camps by withholding services. "The government has resorted to using new weapons, those of hunger, thirst and abuse. It's worse than bombing," said El Basher. But he also predicted that any effort to force IDPs to move by withholding services would be unsuccessful. "IDPs would rather die in the camps, in view of the international community, than alone in the bush." Asked about the government's encouragement of voluntary returns, the umdas scoffed, noting that many areas formerly inhabited Abu Shouk residents have been taken up by well-armed migrants from West Africa. "We can't return home, or settle in other areas either," they said.

¶9. (SBU) Comment: It is important to note that the humanitarian community working in Abu Shouk has not documented such a dire and deteriorating situation as described by these highly politicized umdas. Although the primary and largest NGO providers of health and water sanitation services are no longer present in the camp, various organizations have stepped in to the fill the gap. The UN reports that 18 out of 48 pumps are working in Abu Shouk with WES attributing the water situation to the water table depletion. However, UN assessments indicate that in many locations ground water monitoring and quality monitoring are not covered and if actions to address water, sanitation and hygiene gaps throughout Darfur are not taken before the rainy season, there will be an outbreak of disease. In order to prevent a political and humanitarian crisis in the camp, efforts should be made to build trust between the IDP community and line ministries so that these ministries can provide much-needed services to camp residents. In addition, the GOS should continue with the immediate registration of new and ("new/old") NGOs. Post continues to closely monitor the Sudanese government's compliance with the framework agreement negotiated by SE Gration in coordination with the UN and other agencies. Post will continue to work with the UN and the remaining NGOs to monitor the situation in Abu Shouk and other IDP camps and ensure that basic services continue while the capacity of remaining and new NGOs (once they

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arrive) is built up following the expulsion of 13 INGOs March 4.

FERNANDEZ